United Nations A/AC.105/759

General Assembly

Distr.: General
1 February 2001
English
Original: Russian

Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Note verbale dated 23 January 2001 from the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, in accordance with article IV of the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space (General Assembly resolution 3235 (XXIX), annex), has the honour to inform you that on 30 December 2000 the Government of the Russian Federation decided to stop operation of the Mir manned orbital station in February-March 2001 and to provide for its safe and controlled descent from orbit. Touchdown of the station is planned to take place in the open sea, in the waters of the southern part of the Pacific Ocean, far from sea lanes and air corridors, in an area whose centre has the following coordinates: 47° S, 140° W.

To ensure the station's safe and controlled descent from orbit, a special programme has been drawn up that provides for the launch of the Progress M1 cargo spacecraft with an increased on-board fuel supply and its docking with the Mir station. This part of the programme has already been successfully completed.

To make the programme fail-safe, the launch of a Soyuz-TM manned spacecraft is being prepared to deal with potential emergencies.

The overall mass of the Mir station is some 130 tons and it measures about 33 metres along its longitudinal axis and about 30 metres along the lateral axes (docked modules).

There are no radioactive, biological, chemical or other hazardous materials on board the station.

On the basis of ballistic calculations, it is expected that by 20-25 February 2001 the orbit of the Mir station will reach an altitude of about 240 kilometres. From that orbit, a number of braking actions will be conducted by the engine systems of the Progress M1 cargo spacecraft to put the station into a controlled re-entry trajectory.

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According to calculations, the main break-up of the station will occur at altitudes from 90-70 kilometres. Most structural components of the station will burn up in the atmosphere, although some of the fragments will reach the Earth's surface. The time elapsing between the station's re-entry into the atmosphere and the impact of the unburned fragments on the surface of the ocean will be no more than 30 minutes.

From the end of January information about the operation will be placed on the Web site of the Russian Aviation and Space Agency (www.rosaviakosmos.ru) and will also be provided through the mass media. The operation will start between 20 and 25 February 2001 and will end in the first half of March, tentatively between 5 and 7 March 2001.

This information is preliminary and will be updated regularly in the course of the operation.